

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 0945

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, KS

SUBJECT: REFERENDUM RESULTS

REF: SEOUL 0918

SUMMARY: APPROXIMATELY 80 PER CENT OF REGISTERED VOTERS CAST BALLOTS IN FEBRUARY 12 REFERENDUM AND 73 PER CENT VOTED APPROVAL OF BALLOT, SUPPORTING MAJOR POLICIES OF PRESIDENT PARK. VOTING ATMOSPHERE IN SEOUL AND COUNTRYSIDE WAS CALM AND UNEVENTFUL. AFTER HIS FAST KIM YONG-SAM ANNOUNCED THAT HE CONSIDERED REFERENDUM INVALID. PRESIDENT PARK IN CONCILIATORY VICTORY ANNOUNCEMENT STRESSED NATIONAL UNITY. END SUMMARY.

1. AFTERNOON KOREAN PRESS FEBRUARY 13 CARRYING MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS TABULATION ON REFERENDUM RESULTS BASED ON COUNT OF OVER 99 PERCENT OF BALLOTS CAST. THESE FIGURES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

VOTES CAST: 13.4 MILLION (80 PERCENT OF REGISTERED VOTERS)
APPROVING PRRESIDENT'S POLICIES: 9.8 MILLION (73.0PERCENT)

OPPOSING PRESIDENT'S POLICIES: 3.4 MILLION

INVALID BALLOTS: 233 THOUSAND

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FOR SEOUL, FIGURES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

VOTES CAST: 2.1 MILLION (60PERCENT OF REGISTERED VOTERS)

APPROVE: 1.2 MILLION (58 PERCENT)

OPPOSE: 849 THOUSAND

INVALID: 32.7 THOUSAND

2. ON NATIONWIDE BASIS, APPROVING VOTES AS PERCENTAGE OF REGISTERED VOTERS WAS 58 PERCENT. FOR SEOUL PERCENTAGE WAS 35 PERCENT.

3. FINAL TABULATION FOR FOR EACH PROVINCE AND FOR SEOUL AND PUSAN WILL BE TRANSMITTED WHEN RELEASED HERE.

4. JUDGING FROM PRESS ACCOUNTS AND EMBASSY OBSERVATIONS IN SEOUL, VOTING ATMOSPHERE WAS GENERALLY CALM AND UNEVENTFUL. THE HALF DOZEN VOTING STATIONS OBSERVED FROM OUTSIDE IN SEOUL AT VARIOUS TIMES DURING DAY HAD ONLY HANDFUL OF VOTERS ENTERING AND LEAVING. RADION AND TV ANNOUNCEMENTS URGED VOTERS TO CAST THEIR BALLOTS, BUT GENERAL ABSENCE OF PLACARDS, OF CONCENTRATIONS OF PEOPLE AROUND POLLS, AND OF LOUDSPEAKER EXHORTATIONS GAVE IMPRESSION THAT NOTHING IN PARTICULAR WAS GOING ON.

5. OPPOSITION ACTIVITY WAS SIMILARLY LACKADAISICAL. KIM YONG-SAM'S HUNGER STRIKE WAS A NON-EVENT, WHILE KIM TAE-CHUNG'S FASTING AND PRAYERS IN THE MYONG DONG CATHEDRAL FAILED TO ATTRACT ANY CROWDS NEAR THE CHURCH. RIOT POLICE SEATED IN A BUS SOME BLOCKS AWAY DOZED AND CHATTED FOR LACK OF ANYTHING MORE USEFUL TO DO.

6. WITH VOTING OVER AND RETURNS BEGINNING TO COME IN, KIM YONG-SAM ANNOUNCED THAT REFERENDUM WAS INVALID AND THAT NDP WOULD CONTINUE TO PRESS FOR CHANGES IN PRESENT CONSTITUTION. KIM CLAIMED THERE HAD BEEN MORE IRREGULARITIES IN VOTE THAN IN MARCH 1960 ELECTIONS WHICH HAD LED TO STUDENT

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REVOLUTION. KIM TAE-CHUNG CLAIMED THAT NEITHER KOREAN PEOPLE NOR WORLD AT LARGE WOULD "RECOGNIZE" RESULTS OF VOTE. NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY ALSO EXPRESSED REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE OUTCOME.

7. IN FEBRUARY 13 VICTORY STATEMENT, PRESIDENT PARK TOOK SOFT, CONCILIATORY LINE, STRESSING HIS INTENTION TO PROMOTE NATIONAL UNITY. IN WAKE OF NATIONAL CONSENSUS EVIDENCED

BY SUCCESSFUL VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, PARK PROMISED TO DEVELOP
NON-PARTISAN POLITICAL SYSTEM BUT OFFERED NO SPECIFIC
BLUEPRINT.

COMMENT: THE OVERALL RESULTS OF THE REFERENDUM ARE
ABOUT WHAT MOST OBSERVERS EXPECTED. MORE SURPRISING
THAN THE OUTCOME WAS THE GENERAL ATMOSPHERE OF CALM
WHICH PRECEDED AND SURROUNDED THE VOTING. ALTHOUGH OPPOSITION
BOYCOTT APPEALS UNDOUBTEDLY CONTRIBUTED TO THE LOW VOTE
IN SEOUL AND MAY WELL HAVE HELPED REDUCE THE VOTE
ELSEWHERE, NEITHER THE NDP NOR THE OTHER OPPOSITION
ELEMENTS APPEARED TO HAVE THE INCLINATION OR THE ABILITY
TO STIMULATE DISORDERS OR CONFRONTATIONS WHICH WOULD
HAVE FORCED THE GOVERNMENT TO HOLD THE VOTE UNDER
REPRESSIVE CIRCUMSTANCES. THAT THE OPPOSITION DID NOT
BRING OFF THIS CONFRONTATION IS ALL THE MORE
NOTEWORTHY GIVEN THE UNUSUAL ATTENTION PAID TO OPPOSITION
ACTIVITIES IN THE KOREAN PRESS. THIS FAILURE ON THE
PART OF THE OPPOSITION TO IGNITE THE KIND OF DISTURBANCE
WHICH THE GOVERNMENT FEARS MAY REINFORCE PARK'S AVOWED
INTENTIONS TO CONTINUE TO BE LENIENT WITH THE OPPOSITION
IN THE POST REFERENDUM PERIOD.
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